

REMARKS

Claims 11-12 and 15-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Suzuki et al. (US 7,404,423). Applicants respectfully traverse, because the cited reference does not disclose (or suggest) *the grooves each having at least one sidewall inclined with respect to the tire circumferential direction and extending at one angle to connect the tread portion with a bottom of the groove*, as now described in claim 11.

The Suzuki et al. reference relates to a pneumatic tire having a plurality of blocks sectioned by grooves on a tread portion. The reference teaches the aspect ratio of center blocks (defined by the width and the length of the blocks as seen in the plan view) on the tread portion. The Suzuki et al. reference does not disclose any features of the grooves provided between the blocks. Therefore, Suzuki et al. does not disclose or suggest the claimed grooves each having at least one sidewall inclined with respect to the tire circumferential direction and extending at one angle to connect the tread portion with a bottom of the groove, as in the present invention. For this reason, claim 11 and its dependent claims 12-19 are allowable over Suzuki et al. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 11-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Pat. No. 3-132403 (JP '403) in view of Takada (US 6,000,451). Applicants respectfully traverse, because the cited references, even if combined, still would not disclose or suggest the grooves each having at least one sidewall inclined with respect to the tire

circumferential direction and extending at one angle to connect the tread portion with a bottom of the groove, as now described in claim 11 and 20.

The JP '403 reference discloses sidewalls of grooves having three separate parts including an upper sidewall part, an intermediate sidewall part and a lower sidewall part. The upper sidewall part 24 has an angle α in the range between 0 degree and 20 degrees, the angle β of the intermediate sidewall part 26 has an angle between 15 degrees and 90 degrees, and the angle γ of the lower sidewall part 30 has an angle between 30 degrees and 15 degrees (see the English translation of the Abstract and Figs. 2A-2C and 3A-3C). Each sidewall part has a different angle from the other two sidewall parts. Thus, the JP '403 reference teaches providing a sidewall extending in three different angles.

The Takeda reference teaches providing projections at the bottom of the grooves separating the blocks for purposes of preventing stones from being trapped in the grooves. As shown in Figs. 3, 4A-4C, 6 and 7A-7B, the Takeda reference teaches that the groove walls 7 "are each composed of an under part 7A and an upper part 7B" (col. 3, lines 20-22). "The upper part 7B extends from the upper end of the under part 7A to the surface of tread 2, slanting so that the groove width increases towards the groove top" (col. 3, lines 23-25) (emphasis added). "The under part 7A projects substantially perpendicularly from the groove bottom 6" (col. 3, lines 27-28) (emphasis added). Thus, Takeda teaches dividing the sidewall that connects the bottom of the groove to the surface of the tread into two parts having different angles.

Both the JP '403 and the Takeda references teach a sidewall of a groove having at least two different parts that are at different angles. In other words, both references teach that the sidewall connecting the bottom of the groove to the tread portion extends in more than one angle. In contrast, the grooves in the present invention have at least one sidewall that extends at one angle to connect the tread portion with the bottom of the groove. This feature is not disclosed or suggested in the cited references, alone or in combination. For this reason, claims 11 and 20 and their respective dependent claims 12-19 and 21-26 are allowable over the cited references. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

For all of the above reasons, Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of the claimed invention. The Examiner should contact Applicants' undersigned attorney if a telephone conference would expedite prosecution.

If a Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) for an extension of time for response is required to make the attached response timely, it is hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) for an extension of time for response in the above-identified application for the period required to make the attached response timely. The Commissioner is hereby

authorized to charge fees which may be required to this application under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 07-2069.

Respectfully submitted,

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